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ABSTRACT

Although the role of women in the American economy has come a long way in the years since 1950, women have made relatively little progress in quite a number of areas. In the years during and after World War II, women's employment has increased significantly, with married women being the ones who have entered the work force most rapidly. Despite the rapid rise in women's labor-force participation, working women remain concentrated in traditionally female-dominated, relatively low-paying occupational fields. A large majority of women work because they need money; however, the median annual income of women still lags far behind that of their male counterparts. Contrary to popular belief, the rapid increase in the employment of women has not been accompanied by a rise in family living standards or by a decline in the poverty level. The plight of elderly women is especially serious, with the median income of women over the age of 65 being equal to 58 percent of that of males in the same age group (1982). Recent events such as the proliferation of comparable worth cases and Congressional recognition of the inequalities of Federal pay scales provide hope that wage discrimination against women will lessen significantly over the years to come. (MN)

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The Status and Contributions of American Women in the Economy 1950 - 1983

Mary Dublin Keyserling

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The role of women in our economy har come a long way in the years since 1950, in many respects. In quite a number of others, they have made relatively little progress over the past fifteen years.

Changes in Women's Employment Role

Women's employment has increased to a very significant extent. The proportion of women in the work force rose rapidly during the years of World War II. Their labor force participation rose more than 30 percent, replacing many millions of men who left their jobs to join the military forces. After the war ended, and the men returned home, it was widely assumed that women would leave their jobs in large numbers and stay at home for many years to come. This didn't happen. Their labor force participation rate did decline in the first two post war years, 1946 and 1947, but much less than had been expected, and then began to rise year by year. In 1950, 34 percent of all women 16 years of age and over were in the labor force and the rate rose in each decade that followed to 38 percent by 1960, 43 percent by 1970 and 51 percent by 1980. By 1983, 53 percent of all our women, 16 years and older, were labor force members.

The rise in the 1950's was 11 percent, 15 percent in the 60's, and was 18 percent in the 70's, the rate increasing considerably over the three successive decades. The annual rate of increase slowed from 1980 to 1983 because of

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the serious recession in that period. The increase over the 33 years, 1950-1983, was 56 percent.

Table I

Civilian Labor Force Participation Rates for Women Aged 16 and Over, 1940-1983

Year	Total 1/	18 & 19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 & over
1940	28	43	48	36	29	24	18	7
1945	37	67	55	40	41	37	27	10
1950	33.9	51.3	46.1	34.0	39.1	38.0	27.0	9.7
1960	37.7	51.1	46.2	36.0	43.5	49.8	37.1	10.8
1970	43.3	53.6	57.7	45.0	51.1	54.4	43.0	9.7
1980	51.1	62.1	67.0	66.0	66.0	59.6	41.5	8.3
1983	52.9	60.7	69.9	69.0	68.7	61.9	41.5	7.8

1/ The total for 1940 and 1945 is for women aged 14 and over. The total for the later years is for women aged 16 and over.

While young women, aged 20-24, were the most likely to work before World War II, it was older women between 35 and 64 years of age who had most rapidly joined the work force during the war years. After the war ended, while some of these older women left their jobs, it was a far smaller proportion than younger ones and by 1950 a new upward trend began and mounted rapidly over the years that followed for those in all age groups up to 65.

Today, 70 percent of young women aged 20-24 and 69 percent of those 25-34 are in the labor force. As to all women between the ages of 18 and 64, about two thirds are participants and it is generally estimated that this proportion will continue to rise considerably. It should also be noted that the higher the education the more likely are women to work - 75 percent of college graduates are in the labor force .And because the proportion of women with post graduate degrees is rising rapidly, this proportion can also be expected to mount.

Table II

Percent Increase in Labor Force Participation Rate for Age Groups 18-64, 1950-1983

Period	18-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
1950-60	-	-	6	11	31	38
1960-70	5	25	25	18	9	16
1970-80	2	16	47	29	10	10
1980-83	-8	4	4	4	4	

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Ms. Marilyn Levy of the Rockefeller Family Fund has recently said. "Paid employment is - and will continue to be - a fact of life for American women...By 1990 it is projected that there will be 60 million women workers in comparison with 68 million men workers in the United States...By 1995, projections have been made that 91 percent of all women between the ages of 25 and 34 - married, unmarried, children and no children - will be in the work force, so parity is close at hand - at least in terms of numbers."

As employment of women increased over the past four decades, it has been married women who have entered the work force most rapidly. They now represent more than half of the female work force, as compared to a little more than a third before World War II. Single women, as a proportion of all women in the labor force, have dropped almost in half over the period, as shown in Table III below.

Table III

Marital Status of Women in the Civilian Labor Force, 1940-1983 1/

Year	Percent Distribution of Female Labor Force				Female Labor Force as Percent of Female Population				
	Total	Single	Married, Total 2/	Widowed or Divorced	Total	Single	Married, Husband Present	Married, Total 2/	Widowed or Divorced
1940	100	48.5	36.4	15.1	27.4	48.1	14.7	16.7	32.0
1950	100	31.6	52.1	16.3	31.4	50.5	23.8	24.8	36.0
1960	100	24.0	59.9	16.1	34.8	44.1	30.5	31.7	37.1
1970	100	22.3	63.4	14.3	42.6	53.0	40.8	41.4	36.2
1980	100	25.0	59.7	15.3	51.1	61.5	50.1	50.7	41.6
1983	100	26.1	58.5	15.4	52.9	65.0	51.8	52.3	

1/ 14 years old and over through 1960; 16 years old and over thereafter
2/ Includes married, spouse absent

The labor force participation rate of married women more than tripled between 1940 and 1983, and more than doubled after 1950 - the most rapid increase for any

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An especially important increase in the labor force participation of women has been that of married women with husbands present and with children. Among those with children aged 6-17 only, the rate considerably more than doubled from 1950 to 1982, up from 28.3 to 63.2 percent. Those with children under six entered the work force most rapidly, up from 11.9 percent in 1950 to 48.7 percent in 1982- a more than fourfold increase.

Table IV.

Labor Force Participation Rates Of
Married Women (Husbands Present) By Age and Presence of Children, 1950-1982

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1982
Married women, husbands present	23.8	30.5	40.8	50.2	51.2
with own children 6-17 only	28.3	39.0	49.2	61.8	63.2
with children under 6	11.9	18.6	30.3	45.1	48.7
with no children under 18	30.3	34.7	42.2	46.0	46.2

Today, more than half of all children under 6 years of age -over 8 1/2 million- have working mothers. The number has risen very rapidly over the years, and has increased more than 3 million since 1970.

Far more day care facilities, and at affordable cost, have become of the greatest importance to working mothers. A serious problem for these women is the fact that Federal funding for day care has been reduced by about 30 percent, while the cost of care has risen considerably. Also disturbing has been the elimination of Federal day care standards and the great difficulty most states have faced in financing day care licensing and the maintenance of adequate quality.

It is estimated that as many as 6 to 7 million children from very young years through the age of 13, and with working mothers, are unsupervised part or all of the day.

Mothers who head their families have suffered especially. Their number has more than doubled since 1960 - up from 4.5 million to 9.6 million in 1982, and presently well over 60 percent of them are in the labor force, and over 60 percent of them have children. More than a third of these women are in poverty.

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Another development related to childbearing should be mentioned. According to a recent study of the Census Bureau, the percentage of U.S.women who bear a child before they are married, or are pregnant when they marry,has doubled since World War II. The Bureau found that from 1940 to 1945, 4.5 to 5.5 percent of women reported that they had children before their first marriage. The proportion rose to 10.7 percent for women who first married between 1970 and 1974 - an out-of-wedlock birth rate that more than doubled. The Census Bureau study analyzed childbearing by women born between 1905 and 1959 and found that the larger percentage of out-of-wedlock births recorded was among women born between 1955 and 1959. Nearly two fifths of the babies of these women, under the age of 20, were born out-of-wedlock.

The report also showed that about a quarter of the women married between 1970 and 1974, were pregnant before marriage, more than double the proportion of women married between 1935 and 1949.

The Bureau found, too, that women are increasingly delaying their first births. Of those born between 1935 and 1939, 70 percent bore their first child before they were 25; of those born between 1945 and 1949, the percentage was 60; and it was 53 percent for those born between 1950 and 1954.

It was also found that women are now completing their childbearing at a younger age than in earlier years. Of those born between 1935 and 1939, 82 percent had completed their childbearing before they were 35 years old. This has been a factor in the increased employment of middle aged women.

The Occupations Held By Women

Despite the rapid rise in women's labor force participation rate, working women remain concentrated intraditionally female occupational fields which are relatively low paid. In 1983, 98 percent of secretaries, stenographers and typists were women; 97 percent of welfare service aides, 96 percent of registered nurses, 91 percent of bookkeepers, accounting and auditing clerks, 89 percent of health service workers and 83 percent of elementary school teachers.

Today, more than a third of employed women hold clerical and kindred jobs, a little more than a quarter are sales and service workers (including private household jobs) and about 10 percent are operatives (except transport) and laborers.

While about a quarter of employed women were managers and professional workers, about half of them in these occupations were in the fields of nursing and health service, and teaching at the elementary and secondary school levels. Women occupied only 5 percent of top management positions. But there were some changes in this area in recent years which are encouraging. The proportion of women who are lawyers and judges rose from 4 percent in 1972 to 15 percent in 1983, physicians from 10 to 16 percent, pharmacists from 13 to 27 percent, engineers from 1 to 6 percent, college and university teachers from 28 to 36 percent, and personnel and labor relations specialists from 31 to 52 percent. While these gains are impressive, it should be mentioned that the percentage of all the women employed in these six specific occupations was less than 2 percent of the total number of women employed in 1983.

Table V

Percent Distribution of Employed Women 16 Years Old and Over In Each Occupation Group, 1940 - 1982 1/

All Occupational Groups	1940	1945	1950	1960	1970	1980	1982
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Clerical & kindred workers	21	25	27	31	35	34	35
Operatives	18	24	20	17	15	10	10
Private household workers	18	9	9	8	4	3	2
Professional	13	8	12	13	15	16	16
Service	11	10	13	15	16	19	17
Sales	7	7	9	8	7	7	7
Farms	6	10	4	2	1	1	1
Managers	4	4	4	4	4	7	7
Crafts	1	2	1	1	2	2	2
Laborers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

1/ 1983 is not shown because the occupational categories were changed that year by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. The occupational distribution that year did not, however, change significantly from 1982.

hanges in Women's Earnings

A large majority of women work because they need the money. In 1983, 45 percent of all women in the labor force were single, separated, widowed or divorced. Most of them worked in support of themselves and their dependents. A considerable proportion of the married women with husbands present, worked because their husbands' incomes were less than they felt necessary to meet basic family requirements.

It is important to note that despite many factors which might have been assumed to have increased women's wages, and which will shortly be discussed, the median annual earningsof those who worked year-round, full-time, did not rise for a considerable number of years, measured in constant dollars - that is, adjusted for inflation. Wages so adjusted and compared are described as "real wages." In 1982, their real median earnings were actually 2 percent less than in 1970 - a striking contrast with the decade of the 1960's, when they increased 23 percent. While 1983 data are not yet available, it can be estimated that the median annual earnings of such women, that year, did rise but did not exceed the 1970 level, measured in constant purchasing power.

Gross weekly earnings, measured in constant 1977 dollars, are reported for all nonsupervisory workers, men and women, in private nonagricultural industries. They averaged $198 in 1973 and by 1983 they were down to $171 - a decline of 14 percent. actually, in 1963, average gross weekly earnings, measured in 1977 dollars, were $175 - two percent higher than last year. It is estimated that women's average gross weekly earnings,measured in constant dollars, have not changed significantly relative to those of men. To have had the purchasing power last year of the majority of our workers actually lower than they were twenty years earlier, has been a very disturbing happening. Industrial production capacity has mounted very substantially over the last twenty years. In the 1960's up to 1972-73, weekly average real earnings rose, keeping purchasing power moving forward and assuring mcunting sales of goods and services. But to have had real average earnings in subsequent years lower than they were so many years earlier, has been a major factor in producing the two recent serious recessions, When many people have less money with which to buy goods and services, sales decline, unemployment increases, and other economic prcblems follow, including diminished federal revenue and much larger federal deficits.

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Changes in Family Living Standards

One should look, too, at changes in family income, over recent years, which have also been of serious concern to women, and to the economy in general.

Many people have thought, in recent years, that with the rapid increase in the employment of women family living standards would have risen and poverty declined. This has been very far from true. Median family income, measured in 1982 dollars, had risen from $18,317 in 1960 to $24,528 to 1970 - an increase of 34 percent. But in the 1970's, real median family income went up and down slightly, and by 1982 had dropped to $23,430, a level 4 1/2 percent less than in 1970. Over the twelve years that went by, the median real spending power of families had fallen - a serious problem. To have had industrial production capacity mount considerably over that period and to have had median family income, in constant dollars, decline, is obviously a cause and result of major economic troubles.

In 1982, among all married couples more than half the wives were in the labor force - up from 40 percent in 1970 and 30 percent in 1960. It seems strange that with that sharp and steady rise, the real median family income of such families was lower in 1982 than 12 years earlier. Actually for married couple families with wives in the labor force, their median family income, which was $30,342 in 1982, was 0.6 percent less than in 1970, measured in 1982 dollars, despite the fact that the labor force participation rate of these wives had increased more than 25 percent.

An even more acute purchasing power decline was that for married couples with wives not in the labor force. Their real median income of $21,229 in 1982 was 8 percent less than in 1970.

The median income of families headed by women was $11,481 in 1982 (only 44 percent of that of married couple families) and it dropped the fastest - down 9 percent from 1970, measured in constant dollars.

Changes in Median Income of Women and Men

It is interesting to note that the median income of women 14 years of age and over, measured in 1982 dollars, rose from 1970 to 1982 - up from $5,561 to $5,887, or by

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decline of 16 percent. Increased employment of women was, of course, the primary factor in this difference, and not any significent difference in discrimination. As was earlier pointed out, the real wages of women who had been employed over this period declined just as did those of men.

Median Income of Persons 14 Years Old and Over, With Income, in 1982 Dollars

Year	Males	Females	Ratio of Women's Income to Men's (percent)
1960	$13,299	$4,111	31
1970	16,580	5,561	34
1975	15,877	6,071	38
1980	14,678	5,763	39
1982	13,950	5,887	42

Another factor in the increase in the median income of women is that the number of older women has risen and their income over the years 1960-1982 doubled, measured in constant dollars, although a relatively small percentage were in jobs. And their social security benefits, in constant dollars, increased considerably.

Elderly Women

The number of older women, aged 65 and over, has increased very rapidly over the years 1960-1982. It rose from 9.1 million to 16.0 million or by 76 percent, in contrast with that of men of this age, whose increase was 44 percent. While in 1960, the number of women, 65 and over, was 21 percent greater than that of men, by 1982 the difference was 48 percent. To put it in another way, while there were 8 men for every 10 women in this age group in 1960, by 1982 the ratio was less than 7. The older people become the mortality gap widen still more, leaving only 4 men for every 10 women among those 85 or older.

The mortality status of older men and women is also markedly different. While 80 percent of all men aged 65 and over were married in 1982, only 40 percent of women of this age were married. And while only 16 percent of men of this age group were widowed or divorced, the proportion of women was 54 percent. Men tend to remarry

considerably younger women when widowed or divorced.

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It is not surprising that far more elderly women, 65 and over, live alone, than men- 6.2 million women as compared with 1.5 million men in 1982. The number of women living alone has increased 59 percent since 1970, while the number of men rose only 27 percent over that period.

One of the especially interesting happenings to older persons is the change in the relative income of men and women. The median income of women, 65 and over, in 1982, was $5,365 as compared with $9,188 for men, a ratio of 58 percent. Measured in 1982 dollars the median income of these older women had doubled since 1960, whereas that of men rose 66 percent.

Median Income of Men and Women Recipients, 65 and over, in 1982 Dollars, 1960-1982

Year	Women	Men	Ratio of Women's to Men's Median Income (percent)
1960	$2,676	$5,534	48.4
1970	3,783	7,646	49.5
1982	5,365	9,188	58.4

Over the years from 1960 to 1982, social security average monthly retirement benefits of these women more than tripled, measured in constant dollars - up from $89 to 298.

Social Security Average Monthly Retirement Benefits, by Sex, in 1982 Dollars, 1960-1982

Year	Women	Men	Ratio of Women's to Men's Benefits
1960	$202	$276	73.1
1970	259	336	77.1
1980	359	459	78.2
1982	362	470	77.0

In 1982, 17 1/2 percent of all women aged 65 and over were in poverty. Despite the general rise in poverty of all persons from 1974, the proportion of older women declined a little.

Recent Trends in Poverty and Its Feminization

Over the past nine years, the poor have become considerably more numerous. In 1982, the number of all persons below the poverty line was 34.4 million, as compared with 23.0 million in 1973 - an increase of 50 percent. Over those years, the proportion

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of all our people in poverty rose sharply from 11 to 15 percent - a 36 percent increase. In great contrast, between 1960 and 1969, 15.7 million people, including nearly 8 million children escaped from poverty as a result of the rate of economic growth, low unemployment-and inflation, improved income distribution, and the War on Poverty programs. The poverty rate of persons decline 54.5 percent.

The family poverty rate rose even faster from 1973 to 1982, than that of persons - up from 8.8 to 12.2 percent, a rise of 39 percent. This,too,is in striking contrast with the nine years, 1960-1969, when the family poverty rate was reduced by 44 percent. Actually the family poverty rate in 1982 climbed to its highest level since 1966.

Poverty has had its hardest impact on women. Over 60 percent of all poor people, 16 years of age and over,were females, in 1982. Of the elderly poor, over the age of 65, 71 percent were women. The number of people in poverty in families headed by women was almost half of all the poor, in 1982, although their families constituted only 15 percent of all families. That year, 36.3 percent of all families headed by women lived in poverty, a rate three times higher than for families as a whole. It should be noted, also, that the children in these families represented more than half of all poor children. In 1982, 56 percent of all children in families headed by women lived below the poverty level - a truly disturbing matter.

Still another issue of serious concern is that although black families are only 11 percent of all our families, they represented 29 percent of all families in poverty in 1982. Of all black families, a third were in poverty, compared with 10 percent of white families. Also, of all black families, 42 percent were headed by women, well over half of which were in poverty. These families are undoubtedly the most neglected in the country. Of the 9.7 million black persons in poverty, 6.5 million, or two thirds, were in families headed by women. And it should be noted, too, that nearly half of black children under 18 were impoverished.

An important study recently made by the Joint Committee on Taxation showed a factor of importance in the poverty increase: families with poverty level incomes are facing considerably higher tax rates than they did a few years ago - an especially disturbing development in contrast with the fact that high income families are enjoying

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lower tax rates. As the Washington Post recently commented,"Poor people are paying more taxes because payroll taxes have been rising sharly and because the administration's tax program did not include adjustments in the features of the income tax code that affect them most. The 1981 tax cut reduced income tax rates, but it did not increase either the standard deduction or the personal exemption. As a result, the tax threshhold, the income level at which people must start paying income taxes, has stayed constant while inflation has pushed more and more poor people, especially those who work, into the taxable income range. At the same time, the Earned Income Tax Credit - which supplements the earnings of the very poor families - has seriously eroded in value."

In 1984, in consequence of these development, it is believed that a family of four earning wages below the poverty level will pay 10.5 percent of its very limited resources in taxes in 1985, compared with 4 percent in 1978.

Some people, including a number in government, after the 1982 poverty figures were released, argued that they were overstated because only cash income was counted, and that the measurement of poverty income should also include in-kind benefits such as Medicade, Medicare, food stamps, and other social service assistance. Late in February, this year, the Census Bureau released a study that totally contradicted that contention. It reported that even when in-kind benefits are included as income, the poverty rate rose evn more sharply, in recent years, because benefits have been cut considerably. It estimated that when the full market value of non-cash benefits were counted as income, the number of people in poverty, so redefined,increased from 15.1 million in 1979 to 22.9 million in 1982, an increase of 52 percent, or substantially faster than when only cash income was measured. This was not only due to budget cuts but from the failure of welfare benefits to keep pace with inflation. A report of the Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives pointed out recently that the purchasing power of welfare benefits for low income families with children dropped 33 percent from 1970 to the start of 1984. Using Aid To Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) statistics, compiled by the Congressional Research Service, the House Committee pointed out that in current dollars average monthly

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maximum benefits paid to families of four, with no other income, rose over that period, but when adjusted for inflation the actual purchasing power of the benefits fell by one third. It should especially be noted that 97 percent of AFDC clients are women and children and 4 of 5 AFDC families are headed by women. It has been pointed out that as a result of the budget cuts and inflation, more than 325,000 families lost eligibility under AFDC and another 325,000 to 350,000 families had their benefits reduced. Over 50,000 chuldren on AFDC were dropped between 1981 and 1982. It can be noted that AFDC benefits paid in the District of Columbia for families of four declined 41 percent in purchasing power from 1970 to early 1980, 47 percent in Virginia and 31 percent in Maryland.

Not only have many women suffered from AFDC declines, many have been removed from Supplementary Security Income who are earners of low wages. Many were removed from Day Care Assistance. Over one million mothers and children have been removed from Medicaid. Over 1 1/2 million people were eliminated from Food Stamps Assistance and of those still recipients, benefits were reduced by nearly one third.

Another factor which has increased the feminization of poverty, in recent years, is the decline in the real purchasing power of the Federal minimum wage, over two thirds of the recipients of which are women. The rate is now $3.35 an hour. Measured in constant dollars, this more than 30 percent less than was the minimum wage in 1968 - very hard for a minimum wage recipient to be that much worse offf. A mother with two children who receives the minimum wage and is lucky enough to work year-round, full-time, is considerably below the poverty level.

The Gap Between the Wages of Women and Men

Another issue of serious concern is the fact that women's median annual earnings for year-round, full-time work, relatives to those of men also so employed, are less than they were many years ago. The ratio of these earnings of women to those of men in 1982 was 62 percent, four percentage points below what it was in the mid-1950's. It is very surprising that the wage gap is greater than it was nearly 30 years ago, despite many changes which one would have thought would have long since raised women's earnings relative to those of men. A major factor is that their educational achievements, relative to those of men, has increased very impressively.

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Women now receive a far larger proportion of all higher educational degrees granted than they did in the mid fifties.

Recent statistics for 1981-82 show that women then received half of all Bachelor's degree awarded compared with 44 percent in 1971-72. They also received half of all Master's degrees, up from 40 percent in 1971-72 (and from less than30 percent in the mid '50's.) The change with respect to Doctor's degrees was even more impressive: up/from 16 percent ten years earlier to 32 percent - a rise of more than 50 percent. (The proportion women received in the mid-50's was less than 10 percet.) It is strange that these gains didn't do much to close the wage gap.

It is equally surprising that women with higher educational experience suffer almost as severe a wage gap as working women in general. Comparing the earnings of men and women, aged 25 and over, and with a college degree, and who worked year-round, full-time, the ratio was 62 percent in 1980, essentially the same as in 1970. Even more disturbing, female college graduate didn't earn as much in 1980 as men with only one to three years of high school.

Professional women have a lesser wage gap than women in general. The ratio of their median earnings in 1980 was 66 percent of those of men, both working year-round, full-time, but this was gap was even worse than it was 10 or even 20 years earlier.

The toughest occupation wage gap in 1980 was that for year-round, full-time women workers in sales occupations; their median and salary income was 49 percent that of men.

There have been other developments, as well, that might have been expected to improve the relative wage status of woemn relative to men. Among them is the fact that womn's work life has lengthened rapidly. Today, the average 20 year old young woman can expect to work for more than 30 years, more than double the work life expectancy her 20 year old predecessor would have anticipated in 1950.

A recent study of "New Worklife Estimates," made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, has reported that between 1970 and 1977 "although the average worklife duration of men remained nearly constant, that for women increased by about 12 years." When similar data become available for the present year, the increase can be expected

to be very much more.

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One might also have thought that the passage of specific legislation, directed toward elimination discrimination in employment on the basis of sex, would have narrowed the gap impressively. The Federal Equal Pay Act was passed in 1963. Title Vii of the Federal Civil Rights Act, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex (as well as race, color, religion and national orgin) was passed in 1964. And Executive Order 4246 supposedly requires affirmative action on the part of federal contractors. Were these actions adequately enforced, and affirmative action programs made more effective, which they haven't been in recent years, they would have altered the reported differentials to a significant extent.

While over the past twenty years there has been considerable activity on the part of women's groups to press for federal affirmative action programs for equal pay for equal work, and the bringing to courts of inequity contentions, in more recent years there has been much more concern expressed as well with respect to comparable pay for comparable work.

It was until 1981 that most court cases failed unless they related to equal pay for equal work. That year the Supreme Court legitimized comparable worth claims under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That case was brought by Oregon prison matrons who earned $200 a month less than deputy sheriffs who guarded male prisoners.

The biggest court victory thus far for the comparable worth movement was last December when a U.S. District Judge, Jack E. Tanner, in the state of Washington ordered the state government to pay its women employees $800 million to $1 billion in back pay and wage increases saying that the state practiced "direct, overt and institutionalized" discrimination against its women employees. He ordered that formulas be worked out to raise the pay of the state's women workers about 31 percent. Said a lawyer, Winn Newman who represented the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees in this case," Ending discrimination costs money...but no one would dare raise that as a reason for continuing to pay blacks less than whites. If you are choosing blacks and women for certain jobs because you know you can get them cheaper, thatis illegal. The free market doesn't allow that, any more than it allows employers to ignore the

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minimum wage laws or the child labor laws."

Another lawyer who has been defending employers, rather than employees, against discrimination suits, had this to say,"Because of the enormous implications of the Washington state case, employers are now very concerned about the issue of comparable worth...These days, almost every sex discrimination case we see includes allegations of comparable worth violations."

Comparable worth cases have, in fact, greatly proliferated. The State of Minnesota, in 1982 also countered incomprable pay for comparable work for women, adjusting the pay of some 8,000 employees. Some 18 additional states are currently making job evaluation studies of pay inequity.

Several electrical industry manufacturers have recently settled charges against them, agreeing to upgrade jobs in which women predominated. It was the International Union of Electrical Workers that defended the woman employees, winning wage gains for them in more than a dozen cases.

Two years ago the House of Representatives held hearings at which a number of witnesses contended that Federal pay scales were inequitable. This led to studies by the Governments General Accounting Office to ascertain the extent to which women's Federal jobs are underpaid.

In can be expected that in consequence of these and other actions, women's wage discrimination will be lessened significantly over the years to come. National women's organizations which have developed by several hundred over recent years are doing much to improve the lives of women and their families. They work for many, many goals, among them: for equal rights and especially for equity in employment, for advancing employment opportunities, for improvement in the wide range of health and social services, for human rights, for children's care and welfare benefits and for infants' programs, for the assurance of disability rights, for meeting the needs of displaced homemakers. for legal defense, for advancing the rights of homemakers, for abortion rights, for educational goal gains, for the special needs of the elderly, for the needs of women of color, for much greater participation of women in political life, for pension rights -- in every sense for wider opportunities for women. They work at the national

state and local levels for the charging of attitudes and for the enactment of sound legislation and effective enforcement. They are achieving gains. Many understand that advancement for people depends so largely on the overall state of our economy. Healthy economic growth is a basic setting for the progress sought.